

An October



Chester Simpson

WHEN the author of “The Complete Book of Running” collapsed of a heart attack in July 1984, the Army’s emphasis on running did not die with the man credited for inspiring the 1970s running craze.

As the medical history of Jim Fixx was revealed, the cause of his death was placed not on his passion for running but on the cholesterol build-up in his arteries and his failure to get medical clearance to run.

Army medicine drew the lesson that personal risks such as age, medical history and conditioning must be assessed before embarking on a fitness program. An Army task force on fitness under the Office of the Surgeon General declared the benefits of cardiovascular exercise and the merits of running as part of the Army’s total fitness program.

Running continued to win converts, and in the Army renewed emphasis on running made “Fit to Win” much more than a slogan.

Tradition

Story by Tom Mani

In 1985 a local run went Armywide.

“We ran the 10-Miler for people in the Pentagon, with a 10k in the spring and the 10-miler each fall, two weeks before the Marine Corps Marathon,” said Quintin Cary, who came to the race a year after it had begun in 1979 with just 60 participants.

Steady growth had led organizers to look for partners in staging the race. Bringing in the Association of the United States Army as the principal sponsor tied the race to the day before AUSA’s annual meeting, said Pete Murphy, the AUSA contact person for the race then and now. Coming on to provide logistical support was the U.S. Army Military District of Washington.

The first year, the new Army Ten-miler had 1,379 finishers, a big crowd. It was back in 1986, and 1,806 crossed the finish line. Each year since, the race has grown, bumping up against self-imposed limits since 1999.

This year, the fifth year being run out of its own Morale, Welfare and Recreation office by MDW, the Army Ten-miler capped the number of entrants at 18,000, which is 2,000 more than the previous two years.

When the Brown Bess musket fires at 8 a.m. on Oct. 14, and the front runners stride forward, they, the thousands of spectators and the thousands more runners still shuffling toward the start line will be taking part in what has become a new Army tradition. □

To track this year’s race results and get future information about the 2002 registration deadline, go to www.armytenmiler.com.



Tom Mani works for the Military District of Washington public affairs office.